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ABSTRACT

The concept of a functional "we" in a school setting and the idea that people who make up a school community relate school experiences and interpret school phenomena in the form of organizational "stories" provide the theoretical bases for a model to initiate strategies for school development and improvement. The functional "we" concept refers to school community members' perceptions of and reference to themselves as part of a single collective organization versus their identification with specific subgroups of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Many school communities are characterized by the existence of isolated subgroups in which each of the members may be said to be "language/dialect-bonded," in that they share common perspectives, interests, responses, and behavior. The school stories that are told within the subgroups are limited by a group-based frame of reference and are usually fragmented. The fragments reinforce group isolation and mitigate against the emergence of a real school community "we," the collective identity without which no action for self-directed school improvement can take place. This collective identity may be created partially through a systematic and conscious process of shared storytelling from which clearly understood strategies for social improvement may emerge. (Author/MJL)

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STORIES AS A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING URBAN SCHOOLS: TOWARD THE CREATION OF A "FUNCTIONAL WE"

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INTRODUCTION

School development and improvement strategies have captured much of the present national attention focused on urban public schooling. There is a growing sense of excitement, and almost disbelief, that urban children can and in fact are performing with increasing competence on national norm tests; that urban schools are beginning to reverse a trend of decline and failure.

While much of the discussion about this phenomenon has, to this point, been directed to the sheer fact that demonstrable improvement exists, two fundamental questions have surfaced which push to the heart of the whole school development effort:

1) The question of organizational characteristics: What are the common factors which are present in the various programmatic school development methodologies; and how does their presence in a school community correlate with the emergence of the so-called essential organizational characteristics for effective schooling?
2) The question of stages of organizational development: Are there identifiable stages of development through which a school community must pass in order to become an effective, self critical and self developing organization?

This paper is targeted toward a specific aspect of the second of these questions: What is the essential capacity that must be present or developed in a school community if it is to successfully undertake a program of self development? It is the question of beginnings. From a stage-theory model it is the question of essential or ultimate foundation - that upon which all other development is predicated and grounded.

The paper discusses concepts related to the "organization-as-actor" - the organizational capacity necessary for self critical, self directed action through time. The concept directly explored here is that of the "functional we" - the organizational analog to the "I" of individual personality structure.

This paper presents a school development initiation strategy which has had a limited but intriguing field testing in several New York City public schools. It discusses the roots and theoretical context of the strategy. Finally, it suggests that the symbolic perspective on organizational development seems to most adequately describe the phenomena encountered in school development start up and, therefore, provide the most useful analytic perspective for further work on this question.

This paper discusses organizational stories, stories which express and reveal the lived experience and meaning of a community of people, bonded together both to pursue a vision and to secure an existence. These organizational stories are usually fragmented and piecemeal, held in separated chunks by subgroups of the community. It is the actual act of telling the stories, of creating a collective story - as much as the particular content revealed by any story - that is the focus of this discussion.

STORYTELLING AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Schools have stories. Stories which reveal how they have come to be what they are. Stories which show how their members interact; how their organization and structure supports and/or undermines certain kinds of behavior. Stories which describe what is valued by the school community, how things are interpreted and given meaning. Stories which embody reality as lived and shaped by the school. In short, stories which capture and reveal the dynamic essence of the community.

This paper focuses on the process of helping schools discover and tell their stories. It does so because there is evidence that in the telling of stories organizations begin to learn to focus and manage their energy toward realization of their most basic goals.[1]

In our work we have listened to a number of school stories in order to see

what can be learned and then used to help these same schools realize their dreams, stamp out ineffective practice, grow and develop. We now think that this storytelling process can reveal and support essential aspects of the first stage of implementing school based improvement efforts. We think that it clarifies important factors which ultimately determine why one school develops powerfully from a school development initation effort while another seems to wander mindlessly.

THE COLLECTIVE SCHOOL STORY

One of the most important things about school stories is that they can be told from such a variety of perspectives. Perspectives which reflect the vision, understanding and kinds of awareness of subgroups of the community. For example, the parents of a school tend to have one kind of perspective on its work, its function, its value. The students another. While both the professionals and hourly workers will view things with their own special attentiveness and concerns.

Functionally, and of major importance for school development efforts, it is as if these different constituents speak separate (and often separating) languages. Languages which, according to sociolinguistic theory, generate and reinforce different world views, complete with distinct value bases and meaning systems.[2]

We are playing off sociolinguistic theory as a base for much of our thinking about school community constituencies because, from our experience, those constituencies act on separate reality orientations generated by dialect use within a language system.[3]

In such situations identity within the community is with those other individuals who speak the same dialect. Another way of putting this is that the primary bonds of individuals within the community are made to and with those others who

speak the same language/dialect - and therefore view and respond to the world in highly similar ways. We think of these kinds of groupings as dialect-bonded groups.[4]

One effect of this dialect bond is to reinforce social subgroups within the school community. The members of these subgroups spend time with each other and, therefore, enhance and extend their own view of the school and reinforce its validity with their members. The dialect bond creates a matrix of meaning for its members. A matrix which acts as the framework for thinking and acting. A matrix which functions as a quasi-secure home from which group members venture out into the larger community (e.g. "I am a paraprofessional and we...") and in which they affirm a basic view of the larger community (e.g. "no one really cares how hard paraprofessionals work in this building").

School structure and organization also contributes to the strengthening of these bonded groups by reinforcing their group isolating behavior. For example, teachers eat together; paraprofessionals have their own room; students move through organized activities in both forced and chosen groupings. A result of this kind of grouping is that the individual's identification is often bounded only by the boundaries of his subgroup. The only "we" with which he identifies in the larger "community" is the "we" of the subgroup: i.e. "we" the teachers; "we" the students; "we" the support staff.

Furthermore, within these dialect-bonded groups there are fragments and splinter groups which functionally have a life and impact of their own. Again, for example, that group of teachers that hates the principal; that group of teachers is determined not to do any more than the survival bare minimum.[5]

In these isolating places members of the groups tell each other interpretive stories of the school life and in this way reinforce and extend both their own view of the school world and their role in it and the limited definition of

the "we" with which they significantly identify.[6]

What tends to emerge in a school community because of these dialect-bonded groups is a set of separate entities which interrelate primarily in formal organizational ways. Ways which reflect norms prescribed from outside the community and which suggest and reinforce certain internal norms of behavior and particular organizational characteristics which are presumed essential to schooling. For example, the principal is the boss; teachers teach but do not get involved in other decisions; paraprofessionals do what they are told; students receive information quietly. Thus both the formal organizational relationships and the dialect-language or world view of these groups are self reinforcing and self isolating.

THE LACK OF A "FUNCTIONAL WE"

A major result of this isolation is that in many school communities there is no functional "we" which refers to any bonded group larger than or different from a dialect bonded group or constituency - e.g. parent, teacher.

Because of this fact it is impossible for such communities to undertake self directed improvement or development: there is no "we" to speak, to envision or to act. And, of equal importance there is no "we" to seek out available knowledge to apply to "our" situation, to guide "us" in "our" development efforts.

Consequently, in fostering an improvement agenda which will endure and be productive in such communities we posit the first task to be to facilitate the development and emergence of a functional "we" - a self-conscious place from which action is contemplated and initiated. It is our sense that it is this "functional we" that enables a community to adjust behavior, to create new organizational realities and to reshape the functional expectations which individual members of the community have for and with each other.

Charles Hampden-Turner makes a similar point in a broad discussion of the

role of social structure in development:

> The capacity to create structures may indeed be of crucial importance in the development of societies. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of economically impoverished cultures is the extreme difficulty they have in forming secondary groups with reciprocal role expectations which can be relied upon.[7]

We are suggesting that what he refers to as the "capacity to create structures" is a capacity derived from the presence of a "functional we". And that his orientation toward the development of societies is quite analogous to the task of creating school community - so that such community can itself become developmental.

We identify the point of emergence of a functional "we" and the establishment of a creatively functioning school community as coterminous with the emergence of a common language - shared and spoken by all constituencies. A language which is real because it is used to identify and describe collectively experienced and interpreted realities which have been and are part of the school's experience.

It is not a language in the sense that it develops new words - or a new jargon. But in the sense that it uses community language to refer to shared interpretations of primary events in the collective experience. Its referential power produces the accepted and used definition or interpretation of events. Its presence in the community signals the fact that the various alternative interpretations have been negotiated into a broader, collaboratively owned view of the school world.

The functional "we" of a school community is a linguistic construct - or a language event. It names a collective place from which the community events are explored, initiated and critiqued.

The functional "we" is created and developed through the telling of shared stories, because stories are themselves language events. They are linguistic orderings of the world - and linguistic creations of the world. They not only have

and reveal an internal logic and dynamic but through their creative power call a "we" into being - or dissolve a "we" into nothingness.

THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE COLLECTIVE SCHOOL STORY

This section of the paper discusses the process which we have evolved to this point to both encourage and enable a school community to surface its collective school story. We see this process as becoming more useful and effective, but still evolutionary.

The process of telling shared school stories begins with the various members of the full school community (e.g., parents, students, teachers, administrators) telling what it has been like for them as individuals to work and live within the community. In this telling the individual members reveal both their feelings around important school events and how they view their stake in particular community realities. In this way they show to the larger community the bases for their own interpretation of events, structures and people.

The process continues with the full community reflecting on the variously presented private realities, identifying such things as recurring themes, startling interpretations of events and indications of what the school community apparently values in practice as opposed to theory.

Next, the full community talks about its story as presented. In this talking it suggests metaphorical descriptions which capture the various threads of its perceived experience and offer clues about how the total community is (e.g. "our collective experience is like that of a tribe of wanderers lost in a deep jungle where a few have survival skills and many are near panic"; or "our collective experience reminds me of an orchestra with no string section and two trumpeters plotting to destroy the conductor"). It is in these metaphorical presentations that the community is consciously called to reflect and think as a functional "we". The metaphors are pictures of the state of the community

"we" as perceived and lived out at that time in the school's history.[8]

Finally, the full community discusses what all this means specifically as it prepares to move into its future. Emphasis is on identification of learnings which need to be explored and used in the next period of the community's life. This question begins the final discussion: "if we are to decide to move actively from here into the next period, (the unknown, indeterminate future) consciously using what our story tells us, what do we need to pay more attention to?" It is followed by the second question: "given that these things are of primary importance to us, how do we need to structure and organize ourselves to become more effective?"

At this point the school community is entering into a self directed development or improvement process. One which is owned. One which is built upon emerging self and community knowledge. One which has a high probability of enduring and being powerful.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE METHODOLOGY

We have been working on the actual process of storytelling over a period of years, trying both to understand what it is we are doing and to hone the methodology into an effective process to begin school development efforts.

In the early periods of development we viewed the process primarily as a means by which the members of a school community could reflect collectively on the school's historical context and the perceived meanings of those events in its history which it considered to have been decisive in shaping its direction and channeling its energy.[9]

Recently, in light of the research and literature cited later in this paper and our experience in school based development efforts, we have been exploring and stressing the development of the "functional we". We perceive this shift in orientation as enabling us to tap into the formative realities of

organizational settings which operate outside of a strictly rational process. These formative realities include the beliefs, the values, the meaning systems, and, using the language of the most provocative literature, the myth base of the setting.[10] And they become visible through the expression of the functional "we".

The formal hypothesis we are working from is that the orientation and the energy of the setting is grounded in these "extra-rational" realities.[11] Because of this we are working to assist school communities to discover and understand these realities; to see how they effect and shape daily experience; and to learn to work with them as available tools in the school development agenda. Knowing and understanding this gives the school a new capacity to interact with itself and project a viable agenda for development and improvement. An agenda which also can use externally generated knowledge creatively because it understands the linkages between such knowledge and knowledge systems and its daily lived reality.[12]

THE METHODOLOGY USED TO SURFACE THE COLLECTIVE SCHOOL STORY

To introduce the storytelling methodology consider these two quotations from Gregory Bateson:

- "As I see it, the advances in scientific thought come from a combination of loose and strict thinking, and this combination is the most precious tool of science."

- "So far I have spoken of my own personal experience with strict and loose thinkings, but I actually think the story which I have narrated is typical of the whole fluctuating business of the advance of science. In my case...you can see both elements of the alternating process - first the loose thinking and the building up of a structure or unsound foundations and then the correction to stricter thinking and the substitution of a new underpinning beneath the already constructed mass. And that, I believe, is a pretty fair picture of how science advances..."[13]

Bateson's loose thinking is made up of such things as impulsive analogies, wild hunches, intuitions and metaphors. And his strict thinking necessitates staying consistent to the logic of the analogies: tying up the bundles of straggling ends which arrived in the loose period; and making formal connections between the particular setting or situation being loosely thought about and bodies of knowledge which seek to think about the same thing or aspects of it.

Shared storytelling in school settings seeks to follow a very similar paradigm. The idea is to get the full school community exploring the reality of itself - seeking, as was noted earlier, the functional "we". The use of metaphors, as already noted, is calling the community to collective loose thinking: making wild guesses based on quick hunches about the shape of the "functional we". The work with the metaphors and the movement of the community toward self reflective learnings from its story is an example of making the loose more strict. In the ensuing developmental process (the school improvement agenda) a dialectic movement from loose to strict to loose to strict to...is encouraged. Observe the process:

- a three to four hour period is allotteed for the shared storytelling process in the school;
- the format is a large group meeting during which some smaller groups are formed for part of the process;
- a facilitator leads the full process, and additional facilitators work with each of the small groups;
- the full community is informed about the intentions of the storytelling process: by listening to the story of the school as told by the members and participants and by reflecting on what is revealed the full community will better understand itself, its actions and its opportunity to shape its own future;
- the full community is also told how the story will be gathered:
  - in small group sessions, in which each small group is made up of representatives of all constituencies;
  - by collecting aspects of vignettes of the full

story from perceptions and reflections of the individual members of the school community, in as close to a verbatim form as possible (paying particular attention to the emotional charge of the telling);

- on large publicly displayed sheets of paper which contain the verbatim fragments on an overview timeline, but which have no identification of who made which statements;

- the only other information or direction is that the facilitators will allow no critiquing or judging of any of the particular vignettes. Alternative perceptions can be presented as additional information by the telling of another vignette or aspect of the full story.

- small groups of eight to twelve people are formed, each with a facilitator and the process of shared storytelling begins using a collective timeline which moves from the present moment back for about five years but with flexibility to extend further into the past if the need or desire arises.

- the facilitator invites group members to share perceptions of events or realities in the school community's life out loud. These are recorded verbatim on the public sheets. They are located on the time line ("...about three years ago") and they are specific ("...the principal failed to lead by...")

- such stories and interpretations are gathered for as long as the group wishes to reveal (usually around 40 to 60 minutes).

- this material is the first example of loose thinking in the shared storytelling process.

- the small group is then invited to reflect on what has surfaced and been recorded on the timeline sheets. The facilitator suggests the group note such things as periods of intensive activity, periods of emptiness, apparent turning points or decisive events.

  These are identified on the large public sheets with special markings.

- this process is the first example of strict thinking in the shared storytelling process.

- the process continues, using some variation on the basic themes of inviting loose analogical thinking about the school community (e.g., "...it seems to me that we are like...") and then making it more strict by calling for reflective analysis and conclusions (e.g., "...if that's the case, then we need to realize that we tend to act in this way in periods of stress...")

- this dialectical movement continues until the group is self engaged and reflective about its shared history and story.

- at that point everyone is invited to circulate and look at the

stories told by the other small groups. There is no interpretation of the material, just the time line reflections and whatever learnings have been publicly noted.

- finally, the full group comes back together and the facilitator first invites each smaller group to share some of the important learnings from its storytelling process; then invites all members of the school community to share observations and feelings about the process. Finally, with all this new information publicly recorded, the full group is asked to suggest any metaphorical images which capture the state of the community in the present time. This ends the formal shared storytelling process.

- the facilitators then take the material, data, generated in the subgroups and do cross group analysis. The analysis looks for consistencies in the events recorded, the significances attached to them, decisions and actions noted, turning points identified, significant time periods and highlights. This cross group analysis essentially surfaces the key event patterns related to the school community's history and self perception.

- a collective school community timeline is generated and presented back to the school within about a month of the storytelling process. At this meeting, which takes about two hours, the material is presented and reactions noted and a focused discussion undertaken which builds around these questions:

  - what has happened in the interpersonal dynamics within the community since the storytelling process day?

  - which of the learnings suggested during the storytelling process now seem most useful? Have additional important learnings surfaced?

  - what would the school community like to do to build on its own material and strengths, its operations and impact?

- in the meeting the facilitator elicits formation of a legitimated group, representing all major constituencies, to take the responses to these questions and to devise a strategy by which the full school can proceed on its own development and improvement.

- this group becomes the formal coordinating point for further school improvement activities within the school.

Look briefly at two examples from storytelling processes in New York City public intermediate schools in the South Bronx.

TWO EXAMPLES

In the first school an almost unprecedented amount of creative activity has produced a total school planning process which has reorganized the building into three subschools each with three internal families (so that each child works in a small manageable setting where personal bonds can be formed); has coordinated the implementation of a staff developed and constructed teacher center; has captured three large, competitively offered federal grants (nutrition, school development and arts); has encouraged groups of teachers to make decisions on instructional methodologies (emphases varying from Mastery Learning to Open Education - depending on the subschool); has guided a school-community renovation of a nearby community park; and more.

The story told by parents, children and staff reveals a school which three years before was battle scarred, in decline, full of alienated people afraid of the allegedly inevitable South Bronx syndrome of decay and collapse. A school with no functional "we".

The story is the tale of a visionary assistant principal, a cadre of very energized staff, a simple commitment to results ("the children can and will learn"), and a political coup engineered by the teachers and assistant principal with help from a very mobilized community. The story focuses on key events which the political collaborations made happen - and how these events were both celebrated and analyzed.

The story is blunt about the leader: "he can see farther than anyone else in the community - and with clarity. But he really doesn't know how to make things happen. He confuses people. He changes direction. He goes off after several goals all at the same time - and leaves the staff in disarray. He is loved. But he couldn't make this a great school by himself."

The story emphasizes that the members of the community share the vision for the school - it is "ours" and we are "we". Both this new "we" and the

vision have been forged in all sorts of discussions, parties, stories and forums, which are regularly "celebrated" in the community. The leader demands critical participation in the vision which, from the perspective of the staff, creates both ownership and proprietary responsibility; e.g., "this is our vision and no one is going to mess with it dishonestly - we are going to make it real."

Members of the community insist that it was the ownership coupled with the critical awareness of the leader's organizational and administrative weaknesses (an awareness which was celebrated in aspects of the school's story) that prompted the staff and parents to organize a planning body. This body came into being to protect the expressed "we" which represented the full constituencies. It literally oversaw, with the leader, a very effective implementation of the original vision and its continuingly unfolding progeny.

The second school stands about a mile away in socio-economic circumstances which practically mirror the burned-out decay of the first school's community. In this school there is a pervasive feeling that energy is blocked. Things and people don't seem to flow, though taken individually, the staff members are as alert, attractive, and roughly the same age as those in the first school.

In telling their collective story the community members struggle - in marked contrast to those in the first school who practically exploded with remembrances. They find few events to look at which they consider significant in the shaping of the community. And even those selected are vague and the stories told about them are more occasions to complain and to fragment.

The more they struggle to surface their story, the more artifical it feels. Finally, in one of the litanies of complaining someone observes that it is almost as though the school has no center, nothing to revolve around, nothing from which its meanings flow. This statement moves the community and lots of energy surfaces to explore what it means and why it feels important.

Gradually the centerless image is unpacked and finally someone says, "the principal doesn't lead."

The principal is in the room as the story is being told. The other members of the telling community are afraid. It is as if an important taboo has been violated (a symbolic killing of the leader?). There is no question about the accuracy of the statement, just fear and uncomfortableness about what to do next. People fidget; some talk - to no evident point; others wait.

Finally the principal speaks: "I had no idea you felt this way. In my mind I've been trying to support you. But I hear that you don't think I know where I'm going, or how to lead you. I feel like a lot of what you are saying is partially accurate. I will have to reexamine my leadership."

This statement released all sorts of talking energy in the school which over time yielded a significant rebirth of the community (the assertion of a functional "we"), built around the principal's new assertiveness and newly articulated instructional vision.

The importance of these stories revolves not so much around the stories themselves as around the fact that in the telling of the stories each of these school communities moved more deeply into its own development in ways which were productive and powerful. The stories suggested directions for development which worked for the people who comprised the community. The storytelling became an occasion for clarification and solidifcation of the "functional we" of the community. Each story was, in fact, the story told by a community-in-action, though at very different places developmentally, a community with a very particular history, with all sorts of local rhythms, rituals and patterns of behavior. A community with very specific and real problems which stood between it and its goals; but a community with a sense of mission - even if it was vague and partially buried. And finally a community facing an uncertain, and rapidly arriving, future in and through which its members would have to live as both

individuals and as part of the collective. We suggest that it is the strong awareness of every individual in a community that the future must be lived that provides motivation for active participation in the shared development of the community.

Each of these communities revealed a strong capacity to be self reflective; a remarkable resilience of members who were, in effect, censored by the community; and a solid ability to design and deploy strategies for its own corrective development. And both have at this point (two to five years from the original storytelling discussed above), maintained and extended a productive, self aware growth stance.

THE WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Our work has enabled us to explore some of the dimensions of this storytelling in schools. We have been observing and assisting schools which are actively engaged in development or improvement efforts, where self knowledge seems to be the essential ingredient for implementation of innovative practice, maintenance of focused efforts and useful application of available resources.

We have certain working hypotheses which derive from our analysis of storytelling schools. The most significant are:

- The process of storytelling reveals to the school-community fundamental realities about its organizational structure and dynamics. Furthermore, it does so in terms which, because they are derived from the school community's experience, do not have to be translated to be understood or empowered.

  (The schools mentioned above dealt with such primary organizational development concerns as: role and function, task delegation and assignment, formal and informal leadership, relationship of values to goals to strategies.)

- The process of storytelling reveals to members of the storytelling community the primary issues and concerns which must be worked with and through if the school is to become a powerful, developing community; and in terms which are grounded in its experience, which are not abstractions from theory.

(The school situations discussed identified and subsequently explored at least the following issues: non-assertive, ineffective leadership; visionary leadership which cannot manage and administer; lack of available energy among members of the school community.)

0 The process of storytelling enhances and broadens the school community's awareness and in so doing increases the likelihood that external knowledge will be explored, understood and applied within the setting. The actualization of the "functional we" allows the community to seek and apply external knowledge to an "our" situation - a situation which is owned, cared about and in search of improvement.

(In the schools whose stories have been partially recounted the following are examples: application of subschool model to school organizational implementation in two schools of Mastery Learning instructional methodology; use of external organizational consultants on primary issues of leadership and leadership styles; importing of university skills through staff development, sponsored by in-school teacher center; development of home-school linkage systems to improve both communication and school effectiveness.)

0 The process of storytelling contributes to a climate of functional accountability within the building by making explicit to the full community organizational practice and the dynamics of interaction.

(Again, for example: the pervasively felt lack of leadership of a principal; the probability that confused administrative practice would short circuit the vision; the collective awareness that the school community was not a community but a vague assemblage.)

THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective of this work derives from a collection of ideas often labeled cultural or symbolic. The perspective draws on a wide range of disciplines. The theories, research, and case studies are pulled from, among others: symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969); sociology (Corwin, 1976; Davis, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1976; Selznick, 1949; Perrow, 1979); organizational theory (Weick, 1976; Pettigrew, 1976; Louise, 1980; Ouchi, 1981); anthropology (Ortner, 1973); political science (Edelman, 1977; Dittmer, 1977); religion (Loder, 1981; Winter, 1981; Van Bruen, 1972);

sociolinguistics (Nida, 1964, 1974) and phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Schutz, 1967).

The primary premise of the perspective is that in modern organizations ambiguities and uncertainties arise around goals, procedures, roles, responsibilities, and processes. The main problem becomes one of meaning, as both participants and external constituencies struggle to establish a basis of understanding, acting, and assessing the results of activities and events.

Rational beliefs and procedures provide one basis for interpreting acting and assessing activities and events. But in many organizations such logic leaves much to be explained, and produces a need for other concepts and ideas to help participants make sense of their experience and to find a foundation for belief, faith and hope. The symbolic perspective emphasizes organizations as ongoing cultural systems in which meanings are constantly negotiated and redefined among insiders and between insiders and outsiders.

The symbolic perspective introduces concepts which typically fall outside the jurisdiction of organizational theory - at least the dominant school, predicated on rational-technical logic. The most important of these concepts appear to us as:

1. Myth, appearance, and accounts (Cohen, n.d.; Goffman, 1975; Katmens, 1977; Leifer, n.d.; Loder, 1981; Manning, 1979; Moore, 1949; Scott and Lyman, 1968; Shlein, n.d.; Westerlund and Sjostrand, 1979)

2. Ritual and ceremony (Blum, n.d.; Burnell, 1969; Geertz, 1972-1980; Gluckman and Gluckman, 1979; Hunt, 1977; Kaible, n.d.; Lancy, 1975; Manning, 1979; Meyerhoff, 1971; Ong, 1963; Pascale, 1980; Trice, et al, 1969; Vogt, 1977)

3. Stories, fairy tales, and sagas (Bettelheim, 1977; Brunrand, 1980; Clark, 1972; Mortray, 1979; Mitroff and Kilman, 1975; Propp, n.d.; Wilkins and Mortin, 1979; Wilkins, 1980)

4. Metaphors and signals (Bateson, 1972; Berggren, 1962; Brown, 1976; Fieldman and March, n.d.; Fernandez, 1979; Gordon, 1978; Huff, n.d.; Manning, 1979; Martin, 1980; Morgan, 1980; Ortony,

1975; Petrie, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Schon, 1979; Winter, 1981)

5. Play, foolishness and humor (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Gordon, 1961; Hansot, n.d.; Loder, 1981; March, 1976)

These concepts are used to examine, interpret, and explain activities, events, and processes in modern organizations. They all converge on the general questions of the creation of meaning - for both the collective community and then for all individual members of it.

The predominant logic in organizational theory links activities to events, decisions to outcomes, goals to direction, structure to control and leaders to results in a cause-effect relationship, where the former are seen as antecedents and the latter as consequences. If the relationships among these concepts are weak or non-existenet the organization is depicted as loosely coupled.[14]

The symbolic perspective entertains the possibility that the relationship between organizational activities and outcomes may work the other way - decisions attract outcomes, events produce activities, or leader's posture get linked to results. This possibility is derived from observation, using accepted anthropological and ethnological methods. Methods whose primary purpose is to uncover the operant meaning, assumptions and systems which drive the development and expression of cultural forms.

It is, furthermore, central to the symbolic perspective to emphasize that organizational phenomena serve principally as symbols which promote faith, belief and meaning - particularly in ambiguous, uncertain organizations. For example:

- Organizational structure reflects prevailing social myths and thus secures the confidence and support of local constituencies[15]; signals images which provide a basis for perceptions of an organization's worth and stature[16]; and provides the public assurance that important problems are under governmental control.[17]

- Decision-making, problem-solving, and planning are seen as rituals which provide arenas for status to be recognized, ideologies to be

promulgated[18], myths to be renegotiated or revived[19], or new values to be identified and reinforced.[20]

- Leadership activities are valued for appearance and for what is expressed rather than what is accomplished.[21]
- Evaluations are rituals which convey accountability and control.[22]
- Management information systems are myths which signal efficiency and protect informal processes from outside interference.[23]

From the symbolic perspective, stories in organizations are important as a medium of socialization and communication. For example, in the double helix model of Hampden-Turner, which suggests a paradigm for psycho-social development, a strong case for the efficacy of stories as important bridges for the individual needing to confirm identity in relationship to the group can be made. While at the same time the stories can enable the group to make explicit its meaning system and thus provide integrated feedback to the individual moving through the cycle of competence.[24]

Stories carry myths and metaphors. They express and reconfirm important organizational values. Stories are also important as mechanisms of organizational control. There is some evidence that in the business and industrial sector, organizations with positive stories around principles, practices, and relationships work better than those without stories or with stories that are negative.[25] The emerging theory "Z"[26] is predicated on symbolic assumptions in which clan control and development is derived from complete socialization as evidenced by uniform values and beliefs. The lieterature cited earlier demonstrates that the expression of values and beliefs in inextricably tied into metaphors and stories, myths and storytelling. And working definitions of "clan" suggest a metaphorical picture of organizations in which stories serve to elucidate and discriminate boundaries and social system interaction.[27]

IMPLICATIONS: TOWARD A STAGE THEORY OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The work we are doing with school stories is starting to suggest a broad new conceptual direction which may be helpful in extending school development processes more broadly and clearly throughout the nation's schools. This direction is related to the possible emergence of a useful stage theory for school development. By this we mean to suggest an evolutionary unfolding of development whose increasing complexity is predicated on achievement of prior and necessary competencies within the school community. Competencies which are revealed in explicit behaviors which are themselves evidence of the interactive capacities of the organization both as an organization to its social context and as a social field in which its individual members can express and achieve mutuality and growth.

We are not going to focus in detail on the possibility of this stage theory in this paper. Except to make a suggestion which may enable some of the existing work on school development to be more effectively integrated. The suggestion:

> Based on our work with organizational stories and the emergence of the "functional we" we suggest that the presence of such a "functional we" is the basic essential ingredient for the initiation or extension of all school development efforts. Its existence in an organization is parallel to the presence of "basic trust" in the Eriksonian model of personality development.
>
> Its absence means that all future work within the particular organizational setting will, either explicitly or implicitly, revolve around the setting's attempt to establish the "we". Unless this task is understood, accepted and adopted as the legitimate work of the community the struggle toward development will short circuit. Energy will be diverted away from the content focus of programmatic school development efforts because the school is seeking to build a foundation for development rather than implement specific aspects of a programmatic strategy.
>
> When the "we" is in place, the school community can and will wrestle with the other questions of school development, such as:

- the orientation of the curriculum,
- expectations of children by staff,
- time on task,
- school-wide instructional cohesion,
- school and community interaction.[28]

One final comment: our sense is that the reason all research points to the principal as key in all school development work is because the role and action of the principal is inextricably linked to the school community's ability to forge a "functional we". The question of principal leadership ultimately turns on the principal's capacity to enable the school community to achieve this fundamental objective. Principals who are successful here have a chance of leading a truly effective school. Principals who are not successful here can not take the school further into its developmental growth.

FOOTNOTES AND BIBILIOGRAPHY

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Also: Ebelin, Gerhard. "Word of God and Hermeneutics" from Word and Faith. Fortress Press, 1963. Particularly, pages 318-322.

3. The whole social constructionist orientation is useful here.

4. See: Nida, Ibid.; and the discussions of bonding within a matrix of meaning in Pearce, Joseph Chilton. Magical Child, Bantam New Age Books, 1980.

5. See: Sarason, Seymour. The Culture of Schools and the Problem of Change. Allyn and Bacon, 1971. For a discussion which bears on the relationship between group bonding and organizational structure.

6. Our own staff members report frequently on the fact of these group stories and the almost intractable force they exert over group members. See "Making Local School Development Work", New York Urban Coalition, 1981.

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8. See Boulding, Kenneth. The Image. University of Michigan Press, 1966.
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9. Lecure notes of Robert Hoover in the archives of management design, incorporated in Cincinnati, Ohio.
Also, the doctoral dissertation of Joseph F. O'Connell "The Process of Decision Making and Change: Principals for Leadership in an Educational Setting", Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977.

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11. Based on Jungian psychological model. Also see O'Connell, Ibid.

12. The ongoing debate about knowledge utilization (or the lack of knowledge utilization) is one of the driving questions in our work. We think that defining knowledge in the subjective mode - the knowledge of the community; knowledge as a function of the "we" - gives us the right clue. External "knowledge" is only information which has or has not utility depending upon the perceived needs and desires of the actor - the "we".

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